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The role of urban parks for the sustainable city

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Abstract

International efforts to preserve the natural environment are mainly concerned with large, bio-diverse and relatively untouched ecosystems or with individual animal or vegetal species, either endangered or threatened with extinction. Much less attention is being paid to that type of nature close to where people live and work, to small-scale green areas in cities and to their benefits to people. Increasing empirical evidence, however, indicates that the presence of natural areas contributes to the quality of life in many ways. Besides many environmental and ecological services, urban nature provides important social and psychological benefits to human societies, which enrich human life with meanings and emotions. The main concern of this paper is to address the importance of urban nature for citizens'™ well being and for the sustainability of the city they inhabit. Some results of a survey conducted among visitors of an urban park in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) are presented and discussed. The issues investigated concern people'™s motives for urban nature, the emotional dimension involved in the experience of nature and its importance for people'™s general well being. Results

experience of nature and its importance for people's general well-being. Results confirm that the experience of nature in urban environment is source of positive feelings and beneficial services, which fulfill important immaterial and non-consumptive human needs. Implications for the sustainability of the city will be analyzed and discussed.



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Keywords

Urban parks; Quality of life; City sustainability

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Anna Chiesura, graduated at Pisa Agricultural University (Italy), holds a master degree on environmental management from Wageningen University and Research Centrum (The Netherlands), with a final thesis on sustainable development. She is also a freelance environmental journalist and she collaborates with various international magazines by writing article over nature, environment and sustainability issues. She is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Leisure and Environment, Socio-Spatial Analysis Group of Wageningen University, and temporarily working there as a research assistant. She has been involved in international interdisciplinary projects and her actual professional interest is on sustainable tourism development in Mediterranean protected areas. Contacts on related field are more than welcome.

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